1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
EZ6 Malta EZ6

variety of diseases, among which smallpox and cholera were important, assumed epidemic proportions after several years in which sickness had been prevalent. In 1942, war casualties, malnutrition and disease were responsible for an excess of deaths over births. 161

CONJUGAL CONDITION (Fig. 56) 162

The proportions of single, married and widowed persons has remained virtually the same since 1901. The great disparity between the numbers of married men and married women resident in the islands, a feature of the inter-war period, reduced the number of effective marriages, but the discrepancy was considerably reduced by 1948, when there were 97 married men to every 100 married women, as against 92 in 1921 and 1931.

Comparison with other countries indicates that a smaller proportion of the Maltese people marry than is the case in, for example, Britain, Ireland or Australia but the age of marriage in Malta is much lower than in most other countries. Nearly 80 per cent. of the men who marry do so before they are 30 and, in 1955, 90 per cent. of brides were below that age. (In England and Wales the comparative figures are 74 per cent. and 81 per cent.) Furthermore, 26.2 per cent. of Maltese brides are less than 20 years of age. In Gozo, marriages are fewer, proportionally, than in Malta, and take place later: although there is a higher proportion of brides below 20, the proportion of women married by the time they are 25 is similar in the two islands. The commonest age at which men are married is 25 in Gozo compared with 22 in Malta. 162 582

MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY

While the proportion of the population which is married is relatively low, the resulting depressing effect on fertility rates is more than neutralised by the early age at which women are married. Crude fertility rates alone form an insufficient basis for detailed demographic analysis. Changes in the sex ratio, in migration, and in marriage rates as well as the underlying socio-economic attitudes to family size all must be examined. 162 582 163

The marriage rate has declined since the early nineteenth century. In 1831-40 it was 8 per 1,000 of the total population, while in 1951-56 it was 6.4, having fallen below 7 in the 1850's and remaining below that level with the exception of the two post-war periods (Fig. 54). Annual variations have followed changes in economic conditions as was the case in the rising marriage rate soon after 1900. Plagues, epidemics and wars have generally been followed by a sharp rise, as was the case after World War II.

A high marriage rate, maintained for several years, is generally an indication of prosperity. This was so in the first five years of the present century, while the depression which culminated in the arrival of the Royal Commission in 1911 was accompanied by a fall to less than 5 per 1,000. The high marriage rate of the years immediately following the Second World War soon fell away, but since 1950 there has been an unexpected recovery which has not been matched by a comparable rise in the number of births.

It is possible to assess the fertility of the population by a comparison of the Censuses with Vital Statistics and by relating the number of births either to the number of women of childbearing age (crude fertility rate) or to the number of married women of childbearing age (nuptial fertility rate). Crude and nuptial fertilities are shown in Fig. 57 and in both cases comparisons made with British and Australian equivalents. It will be seen that, in the Maltese Islands, between 1881 and 1948 the crude fertility rate only fell below 130 once (in 1931) and generally fluctuated between 140 and 170. In 1948 it was 175, the second highest figure recorded, but by 1950 it had declined to 130 despite a slight increase in the marriage rate. This would seem to indicate that nuptial fertility is now on the decline, though this cannot be demonstrated statistically.

The comparison of nuptial fertility rates is more valid than that of crude rates since it makes allowances for differences in the marriage rates between various countries. By this type of assessment, the outstandingly high fertility of the Maltese population is even more strongly emphasised. Only once, in 1931, 163

[Text continues on p. 157]

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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Stadium, where most village football matches are played, are in themselves evidence that fights during these occasions are the rule rather than the exception.

Although there is little formal contact between villages, there is a considerable amount of informal coming and going between their inhabitants. Most inter-village marriages are between partners from neighbouring villages, and the network of kin ties that these form helps to bind the villages of a district together. Inhabitants of neighbouring villages travel to and from work on the same buses, and see each other often at the annual feasts of the district. These multiple relations contribute to a certain district spirit. The most striking example is the unity of the Gozitans, although people from the south of Malta have something of the same spirit of belonging to a particular district. Nonetheless, the knowledge the inhabitants of the southern Maltese villages have of each other cannot be compared to that of the Gozitans, who, for the most part, not only recognize each other by face, name and nickname, but usually know a surprising (and often uncomfortable) amount of personal details about one another.

IV

A person becomes a member of a village by being born there, or marrying or moving into it. The administrative details connected with these acts are quite simple. Parents must register the birth of a child at the local police station, and the parish priest enters the child's name in his register when the baby is baptized, which usually takes place within a few days of its birth. If a man marries into a village, his name will be entered in the parish register, for under Church law the marriage must be performed by the parish priest of the bride, or his delegate. If the couple settles in the husband's village or in a strange village, their names will be recorded on the annual census there, the *status animarum*, which every parish priest prepares for his bishop. All changes of address are supposed to be given (but often are not) to the Rationing Office and, if the person is over twenty-one, to the Electoral Office. No other civil authorities are interested in a person's whereabouts.

In point of fact, however, most people live in the villages into which they were born. This is another respect in which the towns

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

Marriages between
621 members of rival partiti are regarded as undesirable. They occa-
[582] sionally take place, but the division of loyalty within the nuclear
[586] family which results often leads to quarrels and, occasionally, to
[593] temporary separations. (The favourite festa-time story of the wife
[538] who refuses to cook for her husband because he belongs to the other partit is based on fact!) Of the marriages contracted within Farrug, 72 per cent took place between members of the same partit. Children of mixed marriages support the feast of their favourite parent: boys normally follow their fathers and girls their mothers.

578- I recorded only two cases in Farrug of adults who changed
621 their partit affiliation. Both occurred over fifty years ago. A leading member of the St. Roque partit left it after a heated quarrel with Dun Rokku over the design for new street decorations. He subsequently became one of the other partit's most honoured members, and even wrote a book on the life of St. Martin. The second man left St. Roque when he married the daughter of the president of the St. Martin club. I was told that the girl's father had insisted on the change before he gave his consent to the marriage. The young man went on to become president of the club, as did his only son. In another village a few young men left their partit after a quarrel with one of the leaders, but all returned after a year.

621 Although an outsider who marries into a village generally supports the partit of his spouse, a few of them, particularly the men, succeed in remaining neutral. Of the 122 outsiders who married into Farrug,[1] 28 per cent of the men but only 8 per cent of the women remained uncommitted. A few even chose to support partiti opposed to those of their spouses. Thus a women from Qrendi who married a St. Martin supporter and moved to Farrug became a follower of St. Roque because she had been a keen member of the secondary partit in her native village. Children of families in which one of the parents is an outsider, especially if the parent remains neutral, often support the partit of their friends rather than those of their parents or siblings. A case in point is that of the president of the St. Roque club, and his brother. Their father was an outsider who, because of his position as headmaster, made a point of remaining strictly neutral. Though his wife was from a St. Martin family, one son supported St. Martin, the other St. Roque.

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[1] 61 men and 61 women. These marriages represent 34 per cent of the total in the village.

3: Buxton D-5 (1920-1921) 1922 EZ6 Malta EZ6

The fortified towns and suburbs, apart from Rabato, form a practically continuous inhabited area. The population, especially in the suburbs, is extremely overcrowded. The country villages are irregularly built along a series of winding lanes, which converge on an open space not infrequently situated in front of the village church. In a corner of such a *piazza* there is usually a café, and it is here that the majority of measurements of the country people were taken, very often as the men came out of Mass on Sunday. Some of the villages have orange gardens, wherever there is sufficient water to spare for irrigation purposes.

Although with modern means of transport it is possible to visit practically the whole island in one day, many of the villages are nearly endogamous, in spite of the absence of geographical boundaries. The men of one village will certainly not seek their wives from a neighbouring village. If they marry outside their own hamlet, it will probably be with a girl from the suburban area. Similarly, many of the town dwellers find wives among the daughters of the country folk. No such distinctions appear to hold in the urban districts. Communications within this latter area are good and cheap, and extensive use of them appears to be made by the whole population.

III.—History.

The ethnological history of the archipelago is not as yet very clear, and further evidence is badly needed. A very interesting cave, usually known as Ghar Dalam, has been excavated by Mr. Despott, to whom I am indebted for permission to examine his finds and his MS. notes. The valley (the Weid Dalam) in which this cave is situated, shows signs of three terraces. The earliest terrace is high above the present level of the stream, which runs on the level of the old second terrace, and the third terrace, on a still lower level, is in most places filled up by *débris*, brought down by the present stream or its immediate predecessor. The second terrace appears to belong to two different periods, as there are in places marks on the rock of undercutting by the swirling of a stream at two very different levels. The river which cut out these terraces must, at least in flood time, have contained a considerable volume of water. The modern stream is, however, even at the wettest time, hardly more than a series of disconnected pools. The Ghar Dalam cave belongs to the earlier part of the second terrace. It contained numerous sherds, mostly Bronze Age. By far the greater part of the cave, however, was filled up with a very large number of bones, the majority of which belonged to a species of pygmy hippopotamus. These bones, and even the teeth, show considerable evidence of attrition by water.

In this fossil bed Mr. Despott claims to have discovered the remains of Neandertal man. All the human remains that have been found consist of very small fragments, and apart from one tooth, there is no evidence to show that these bones really belong to Neandertal man. The tooth is a molar exhibiting unusual characters, but in the absence of X-ray photographs or a section, and comparison with